



# District of Innovation Plan

January 2022-December 2026

## Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session in the Spring 2015 and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from several state statutes and will have:

- ✚ Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- ✚ Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- ✚ Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements and academic and financial accountability.

## Process

On December 8, 2016, the Henrietta Independent School District's Board of Trustees initiated the process by passing a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation to support innovation and local initiatives to improve student learning.

Because this is a renewal of the original District of Innovation, the Henrietta ISD Board of Trustees will not repeat the two required steps listed below:

- ✚ Board Resolution signed by the majority of the District Advisory Team, and
- ✚ Hold a public hearing on whether to develop a plan (TEC §12A.002).

The Board of Trustees appointed the District Advisory Team ("DAT") to discuss and draft this Local Innovation Plan. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, district administration, and local business owners. The committee met initially on December 14, 2021, to discuss, review, and make any adjustments to the originally developed plan.

The plan was posted on the District's website for 30 days, effective December 15, 2021. The DAT will vote on the final District of Innovation Plan on January 12, 2022. Henrietta ISD notified the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's intent to vote on and adopt the final District of Innovation Plan and the plan was submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval on January 13, 2022. Henrietta ISD then submitted the final plan to TEA within 30 days of board approval.

## Term

The District of Innovation Plan is effective in January 2022 and will remain in effect for five years, through December 2026, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

## A Comprehensive Educational Program

The District Innovation Plan's comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the Vision Statement, Mission Statement, District Goals, and Core Beliefs.

## Vision Statement




*All In For Excellence*

## Mission Statement




*All In! Empowered educators motivating students to become inspired, productive learners.*

## District Priorities




### Student Outcomes

-  Students will be college and career ready while being prepared to step into whatever the world has in store for them.
-  Students will be prepared with basic life skills.
-  Students will develop a growth mindset.

### Learning Environment

-  Expand online/remote learning capacity and quality.
-  Develop 5–10-year facilities plan.
-  Fully implement Guardian Safety program and provide for ongoing training and support.

### Community and Parent Involvement

-  Develop a comprehensive branding and market campaign.
-  Provide focused clear communication using the school website and social media.
-  Develop and disseminate a “Newcomers Guide” detailing opportunity for parental/community involvement.

## **Personnel**

- 👤 Set clear expectations for all staff while promoting staff morale and a positive environment.
- 👤 Create a positive culture in classrooms.
- 👤 Develop a mentoring program for new teachers.
- 👤 Maintain a highly qualified, motivated, and professional staff.

## **Core Beliefs**

### **Relationships**

- 👤 Our actions will be student centered.

### **Innovation**

- 👤 It is our responsibility to prepare students for their future.

### **Leadership**

- 👤 Developing leaders is vital to our success.

### **Passion**

- 👤 Instruction will be designed based on the unique needs of learners.

### **Collaboration**

- 👤 Community engagement enhances educational experiences.

## Timeline

Timeline	Activity/Task
December 9, 2021	Board of Trustees held a public hearing and appointed the DAT to draft a renewed Plan.
December 14, 2021	Meeting of the DAT to discuss the District of Innovation Plan.
December 15, 2021	Post the District of Innovation Plan on the HISD website for 30 days.
January 12, 2022	DAT voted and approved the District of Innovation Plan
January 20, 2022	Notification of the Board of Trustees Intent to Vote on District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education.
January 20, 2022	District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education.
January 20, 2022	Board of Trustees vote on the District of Innovation.
January 24, 2022	Approved District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education.
February 7, 2022	District Advisory Team voted and approved the District of Innovation Plan Amendments.
February 10, 2022	Board of Trustees voted on the District of Innovation Plan Amendments and its submission to the Commissioner of Education.

## District Advisory Team

Committee Role	Name	Position
Community Representative	Sam Powers	HJH Community Representative (non-parent)
District-level Professional	Scot Clayton	Superintendent
Non-classroom Professional	Jennifer Thompson	HES Counselor (non-voting member)
District-level Professional	Kendra Bennett	Chief Learning Officer
Administrator	Sarah Scribner	HES Assistant Principal (non-voting member)
Community Representative	Jerri Skelton	HES Community Representative (non-parent)
Parent	Annie Gunter	HES Parent Representative
Administrator	Laura McDonald	HJH Principal
Non-classroom Professional	Merileigh Johnson	HJH Counselor (non-voting member)
Business Representative	Cindy Dunkerley	HHS Business Representative (non-parent)
Administrator	David Smith	HHS Assistant Principal (non-voting member)
Administrator	Dave Holbert	HHS Principal
Non-classroom Professional	Nicki Holbert	HHS Counselor (non-voting member)
Community Representative	Bill Holcomb	HHS Community Representative (non-parent)
Classroom Teacher	Dottie Taylor	HES Second Grade Teacher
Classroom Teacher	Amanda Rosenberger	HES Reading Interventionist
Administrator	Ashley Lamb	HES Principal
Classroom Teacher	Jeannie Frederick	HJH Sixth Grade Reading/ELA Teacher
Classroom Teacher	Julie Wuthrich	HJH Career Exploration/Financial Literacy Teacher





## Exemptions

### Uniform School Start Data (§25.0811)

*A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver for this requirement.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. It also offers the below opportunities:

-  Students participating in Dual Credit courses an opportunity to work with balanced semesters, which align with our local colleges.
-  Allows the district to start classes as a short week which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, junior high school, and high school.
-  An improved balanced instructional calendar days in each semester.
-  An early start date permits students an additional week of instruction prior to state assessments.

### ***Teacher Certification (§21.003, §21.053, §21.057)***

*TEC 21.003(a) states a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as proved by Subchapter B. TEC 21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

To best serve Henrietta ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. The district's exemption from TEC §21.003 would allow the district to consider part-time professionals to each course, allow industry expert professionals to transition to the teaching profession in Career and Technology and assist in staffing high need STEM and dual credit course offerings. Out of state certified teachers could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education, and credentials. Often there are experienced certified teachers in our district that could teach a course outside of their certification area due to their education, background and/or experience. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs.



## **Class Size and Notice of Class Size (§25.111, §25.112, §25.113, §25.114)**

*Texas Education Code 25.112 limits the number of students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade to 22. While the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, the waivers must be applied for annually. Texas Education Code 25.113 requires districts to notify each parent in the class section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio and inform them the waiver has been submitted.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

By seeking an exception from TEC 25.112, the District would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually. While the District intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the District seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for K-4 students, including more flexibility when teaching creative ways of delivering instruction and ability to manage increases in class sizes. Research shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning and not the absolute class size. Small class sizes may have a positive effect in the classroom but must also be balanced with the timing of adding staff, the qualifications of staff available, the makeup and chemistry of the classroom and other classroom influences.

## **90 Percent Attendance Rule (§25.092)**

*Under Texas Education Code 25.092, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. In addition, a student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent but less than 90 percent of the days may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the school's principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage. Districts should have the option to set their own requirement. Local districts need the flexibility to set attendance requirements which reflect their specific situations and expectations.

Abstaining from the requirement means the District will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extracurricular and/or co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. The flexibility can allow for local boards to set higher expectations for attendance while promoting student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in extracurricular activities.

It must be noted, relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code 28.0216.

## **Contract Service Days (§21.401)**

*Under Texas Education Code 21.401, a contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months service.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

With the passage of §21.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes, the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. The determination of how many days is required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision.

## **Professional Development (§11.253, §21.404, §21.451, §21.458)**

*Texas Education Code 21.404 entitles each classroom teacher to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During a planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

It is necessary for local districts to have the flexibility to schedule weekly, and/or bi-weekly instructional meetings during the workday without compromising instructional time. In addition, eliminating the oversight provisions in §11.253 will allow for flexible, responsive staff development activities without having to first be approved by a committee which reduces the time teachers must take from their time to attend such meetings.

Providing mentors to teachers in need should be a local choice and should be available for any teacher regardless of their years of service.

## **Employment Contracts (§21.002)**




*Currently, experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers and counselors who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the staff member's effectiveness. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District an option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired in Henrietta ISD.

## **Out-of-School Suspension for Students Below Grade 3 (§37.005)**

*Currently, under Texas Education Code 37.005, a student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade 3 may not be placed in out-of-school suspension, unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property, the student engages in:*

-  *Conduct that contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Penal Code 46.02 or 46.05;*
-  *Conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense related under Penal Code 22.01, 22.001, 22.02, 22.021; or*
-  *Selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of an amount of:*
  - *Marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 481, or by 21 USC Section 801 et seq.;*
  - *A dangerous drug, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 483, or*
  - *An alcoholic beverage, as defined by Alcoholic Beverage Code 1.04.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

To best serve the students of Henrietta ISD and provide a high-quality learning environment for all students, the District proposes that school administrators be able to exercise professional judgment and place students of any grade level in out-of-school suspension when they deem it necessary for safety and to maintain an orderly learning environment for all students.

Specifically, the District seeks the flexibility to authorize school administrators to suspend students out-of-school below grade 3 when necessary.

The District currently monitors the suspensions of all students, regardless of grade level, to ensure the Student Code of Conduct are applied appropriately across the District. Should an exemption from TEC §37.005 be granted, the District would continue to monitor the suspensions of all students, which would now include students in grades below 3, to ensure that suspensions are appropriate.

The benefits of the proposed innovation are to allow for school-based decision making, assist in maintaining an orderly environment for all students, and allow school administrators to ensure the safety and security of all students more effectively.

## **Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification (§37.105)**

*Currently, a District must maintain a record of each verbal warning issued under Section 37.105(a)(2)(A), including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property under Section 37.105, the District must provide the person written information explaining how to appeal. Each school board must adopt a policy that uses the District's existing grievance process to permit a person ejected or denied entry to address the Board of Trustees in person within 90 days of the commencement of the appeal unless the appeal is granted sooner.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

Texas Education Code §37.105 includes a process for ejecting or denying entry to a visitor who presents a substantial risk of harm or behaves in manner inappropriate for the school setting.

To better ensure the safety and security of students and staff in Henrietta ISD, we propose that the District not be required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from District property/facilities, nor be required to provide written information explaining the appeal process to those who have been refused entry to District property/facilities or removed from District property/facilities. The District currently attempts to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from District property/facilities. The District shall continue to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from District property/facilities in situations where the administrator on-site feels it is reasonable and safe to do so. The District already has a grievance process for taking complaints to the Board of Trustees and there is no demonstrated need for a unique complaint timeline as provided under §37.105.

## **Bank Depository Contract (§45.205, §45.206)**

*Currently, the District must renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd-numbered years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code, the District must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

The District is seeking an exemption from TEC 45.205 and 45.206 to allow the District's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term, if the District determines contract-pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. The exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the District's business.



## **Group Health Benefits for School Employees [§22.004(i)]**

*Currently, the TEC §22.004(i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Henrietta ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision is in direct contradiction to the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

## **Campus Behavior Coordinator [§37.0012]**

*The District is required, by Texas Education Code 37.0012, to appoint a person at each campus to serve as campus behavior coordinator with the primary responsibility for maintaining student discipline. The campus behavior coordinator is also required to promptly notify parents, by telephone and in writing, when a student is suspended, removed to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) or Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP), or taken into custody by a law enforcement officer. The requirement to designate a single employee to maintain student discipline and make all required parental notifications inhibits the District's ability to implement an effective and systematic approach to student discipline.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

The shared responsibility of discipline among campus principals and assistant principals will minimize the loss of instructional time and ensure the safety of all students as well as provide increased opportunities to build relational capacity with parents and students. All campus administrators engage in comprehensive professional learning to support the implementation of the Henrietta ISD Discipline Management Plan and Student Code of Conduct. Assigning existing professionals, the responsibility of maintaining discipline and for notifying parents of disciplinary removals and/or arrests is a much more cost-effective means of fulfilling the duties of the campus behavior coordinator. Since Henrietta ISD employs a Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LLSP) through the Clay-Jack SSA that can assist students with behavior or discipline issues, decisions regarding student behavior and discipline are often collaborative in nature.

## **Revoke of Student Transfer [§25.036]**

*Student transfers may be revoked before the end of the school year if the behavior, grades, and/or absences have been excessive enough to cause harm to the learning environment of other students.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

To address the rare occasions where the behavior, absences, and/or grades severely affect the learning environment in the classroom or of other students the removal of the one will benefit the whole.

## **School Counselor Responsibilities [§33.006]**

*TEC §33.006 requires school districts to adopt a policy that requires school counselors to allocate at least 80 percent of their total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program developed under TEC §33.005. According to this provision, the administration of assessment instruments or providing other assistance in connection with assessment instruments is not considered as time spent on counseling.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

To best serve Henrietta ISD students, decisions on counselor duties and allocation of work time will be locally determined. This exemption will grant Henrietta ISD greater flexibility in appropriately allocating limited resources to accomplish necessary district goals and to better meet student needs.

## **Absences for College, University, Career Tech/Trade Schools or Military Visits [§25.087]**

*TEC §25.087 limits the number of excusable absences to two (2) for approved college or university visits.*

### ***Rationale for Exemption***

Henrietta ISD seeks to allow students greater flexibility in evaluating options for higher education than what is allowed under TEC §25.087. In light of this goal, Henrietta ISD would like to specify the number of excusable absences as follows:

- ✎ Within their junior and senior years, students are allowed a total of four (4) documented visits to acceptable college, university, career tech, trade school, military institutions (including military recruiting and testing).

### **Comments**

If you have any comments or concerns regarding the HISD District of Innovation Plan, please email your thoughts to [scot.clayton@henrietta-isd.net](mailto:scot.clayton@henrietta-isd.net).